# Digital Citizenship: Compass for the 21ˢᵗ Century

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# 2005 Annual Security Conference
## Digital Citizenship - Utah at Risk

### March 7 - 8, 2005

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# Digital Citizenship Compass for the 21$^{st}$ Century

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**Digital Citizenship and the
21$^{st}$ Century Digital Compass Activity**

Directions:  Using your 21$^{st}$ Century Digital Compass determine the best direction.  Each person in the group will take a different perspective - student, teacher, parent. Read the following scenarios.  Come to consensus on a direction to point your compass that matches your opinion.  After deciding your direction analyze why you chose that direction.

Scenario #1 – A student sends a harassing e-mail to another student.  The receiving student retaliates with a "flaming e-mail." *Is sending a harassing and flaming e-mail messages wrong?*

Scenario #2 – When hanging out with friends, one of the students gets a cell phone call and conducts a loud conversation in a public place.  *Is talking in a loud voice on a mobile phone in a public place right?*

Scenario #3 – A student logs on to a file sharing website and downloads the newest song. *Is downloading music from the Internet wrong?*

Scenario #4 – A student has a file on a disk that has been infected with a virus and uses it with school computers. *Is it right to use files without checking for a virus?*

Scenario #5 – An hour before class, a student remembers that a writing assignment is due. The student goes to the library, logs on to a website, and copies/pastes information without giving credit to the authors. *Is using Internet materials without giving credit to the authors wrong?*

Scenario #6 – At home, a student uses a software package to copy movies from DVD's for his or her friends.  *Is copying copyrighted materials right?*

Scenario #7 – Two students use text messaging on their cellular phones to pass information with each other during class.  *Is it wrong to send text-messages during class?*

Scenario #8 – A team of students create a website for teacher at school, but the website cannot be read by students with special needs (disabilities).  *Is it right to make websites that are not accessible to students with disabilities?*

Scenario #9 – During a regular class session, students use their Personal Data Assistants (PDAs) to "beam" back and forth.  *Is it wrong to "beam" information during class?*

Scenarios #10 – Students obtain a copy of the final exam for the teacher's computer by "hacking" the password.  *Is hacking into the teacher's computer wrong?*

# Interpreting the Answers

There is no easy answer for any of the scenarios. In most instances, responses are going to be varied. Why? People are not always going to agree on what is "right and wrong" because they have not have learned the tenets of Digital Citizenship. Often, people will argue that there are "shades of gray" when interpreting each scenario. Their opinions could reflect poor role models, "bad habits, or lack of thinking before acting. The purpose of the compass metaphor activity is to help students analyze the concept of technology use and misuse. The teacher should review the following compass directions in order to better understand student opinions:

**Wrong Direction** – Hopefully, students know the difference between right and wrong technology use. However, a small number of students cause problems for all other students. As a consequence, it is important to allow all students to explore their feelings about technology use, misuse, and abuse.

**What's the Big Deal Direction** – Often students don't consider how others may feel about their behavior, and they believe "if it doesn't bother me, why should it bother anyone else?" So, those students traveling in this direction can't understand what the "big fuss is all about." The teacher needs to help these students see beyond their own personal use of technology.

**As Long As I Don't Get Caught Direction** – Those students choosing this direction believe that technology is there to be used and everything will be fine as long as no one else knows. The trouble with this attitude is that "what we do or do not do" can and often does affect others around us. Many students know that what they are doing is not right, but they believe that if no one knows, that makes it ok.

**It's an Individual Choice Direction** – As technology becomes smaller and smaller, it becomes integrated in our being. Because "my" cellular phone is mine, then what I do with it is "my" concern. These students believe that technology use is a right and not a privilege. Simply put, they don't want others to tell them how to use "their" technology.

**Depends on the Situation Direction** – Some situations do lend themselves to new interpretations, but there is usually an overarching understanding of appropriate use of digital technology. There are times when a student needs to know that some activities are appropriate in one situation but can be inappropriate in another.

**I Don't Know Direction** – Some students acquire technology with little or no training. They may not know what is appropriate or inappropriate. But, ignorance of the rules cannot be used as a defense of technology misuse or abuse. Basic digital technology citizenship skills must be learned before using technology.

**I Am Not Sure It's Wrong Direction** – This is the path of the student who understands some aspects of technology but only "knows enough to be dangerous." Sometimes, this can be worse than having no training at all. When no digital citizenship training is provided, students learn from others and can get poor advice.

**Right Direction** - Going in the right direction of technology use is not as easy as it might seem. Even seasoned users of technology often travel in a misguided direction. The best way to help others to understand the right direction is through discussion, self-reflection, and role modeling.
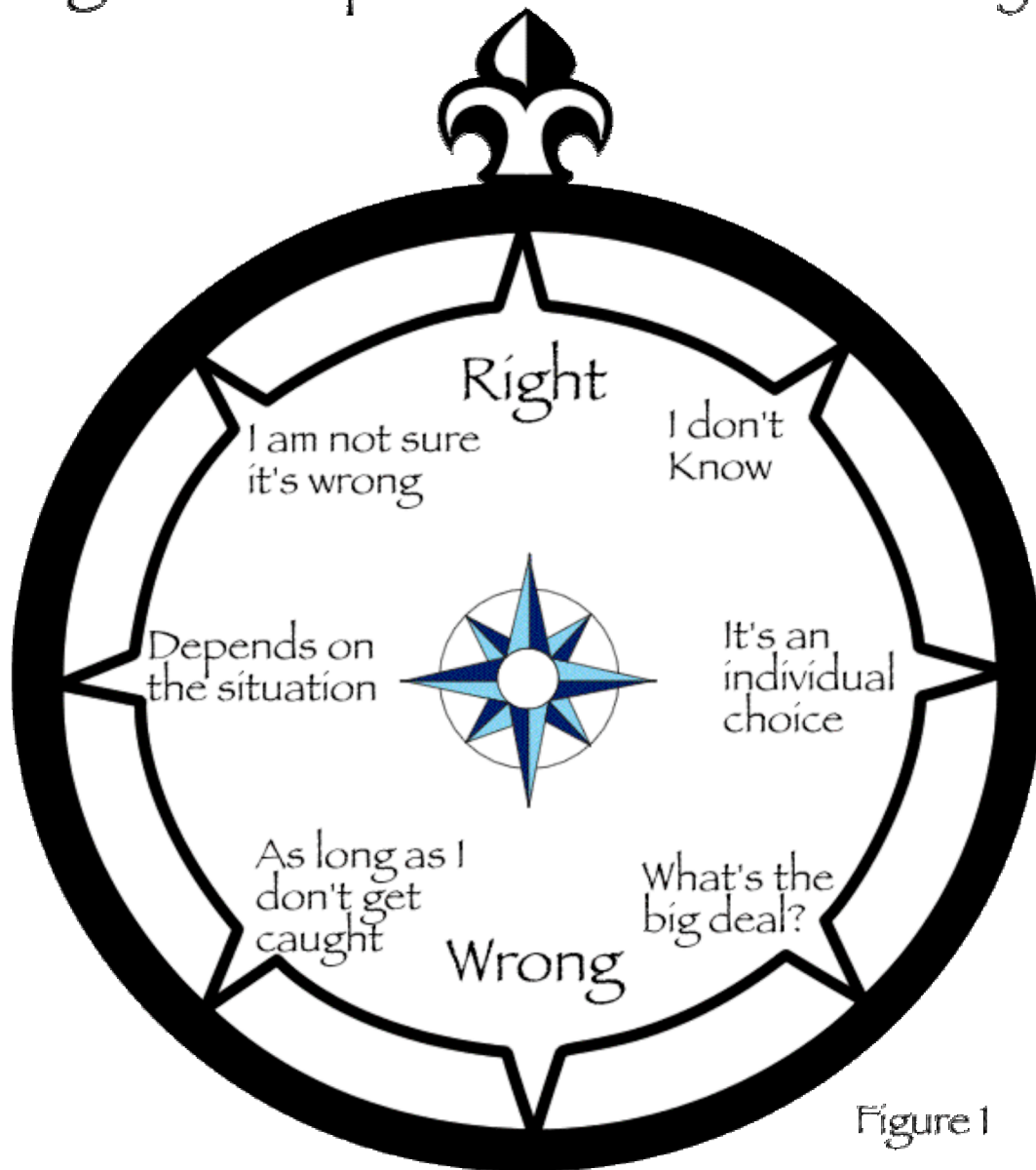
# Digital Compass for the 21st Century

Right

I am not sure it's wrong

I don't Know

Depends on the situation

It's an individual choice

As long as I don't get caught

What's the big deal?

Wrong

Figure 1